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Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fourth session
1-12 March 2010
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement by the American Association of University Women, the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Girls Learn International, Inc., The Grail, the International Council of Jewish Women, the International Federation for Home Economics, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, the International Movement for Fraternal Union among Races and Peoples, the International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation, the Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic, Inc., the Pan Pacific and Southeast Asia Women's Association, Partnership for Global Justice, Passionists International, School Sisters of Notre Dame, the Sisters of Charity Federation, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, the Susila Dharma International Association, the Society for the

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Psychological Study of Social Issues, the League of Women Voters of the United States, the Salvation Army, To Love Children Educational Foundation International Inc., VIVAT International and the World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

Statement

Promises made

We reaffirm the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, including section L, whereby Governments committed themselves to eliminating discrimination against girls; increasing awareness of their needs and potential; providing equal opportunities in education and training; promoting their participation in social, economic and political life; and recognizing that the advancement of women is not sustainable without attention to the rights of girls.

Girls' rights to protection and enjoyment of human rights are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Moreover, in the document entitled "A World fit for children", Governments declared they were "determined to eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child throughout her life cycle and to provide special attention to her needs in order to promote and protect all her human rights".[1]

The Commission on the Status of Women has repeatedly sought to end discrimination and violence against girls. The fifty-fourth session of the Commission offers a unique opportunity for Member States to review progress and ensure all girls the full enjoyment of their human rights.

Promises broken

After decades of promises, girls are still denied their political, economic, social and cultural rights and subjected to cultural and legally sanctioned behaviours that present a grave risk to their physical, psychological, spiritual, social and emotional development. If we are serious about human rights, we must acknowledge the barriers to equality that hold girls back and act to end discrimination and violence against them.

Discrimination against the girl child

Research indicates that girls begin life from a position of disadvantage that continues throughout their lives. One third are not registered at birth.[2] Countless numbers are forced into early marriage, limiting their freedom, ending their education and increasing their risk of domestic violence and death due to early pregnancy.[3] As a result of complications in childbirth or pregnancy, 70,000 girls die annually.[4] Many more experience serious incapacitating childbirth injuries.[5] Girls are infected by HIV/AIDS at disproportionately high rates; three quarters of the 15 to 24-year-olds infected with HIV are young women and girls.[6] Furthermore, discriminatory inheritance laws and practices condemn many to poverty.[7]

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[1] General Assembly resolution S-27-2, annex.

[2] Plan (2009), *Because I am a Girl: The State of the World's Girls 2009*, p. 38.

[3] Plan (2009), p. 51.

[4] UNICEF (2009), *State of the World's Children 2009*, p. 14.

[5] UNFPA, www.unfpa.org/mothers/fistula.htm.

[6] Plan (2007), *Because I am a Girl: The State of the World's Girls 2007*, p. 8.

[7] Plan (2009), p. 201.

Educating girls is often viewed as a wasted investment. Thus, girls are less likely than boys to be enrolled in school and more likely to remain illiterate.[8] For every 100 boys only 94 girls start school; girls are also more likely to drop out.[9] Even when girls are enrolled, discriminatory attitudes prevail. School curricula often reinforce prevailing gender stereotypes and girls are subjected to harassment and abuse by classmates and teachers. Consequently, girls are often unprepared and, therefore, vulnerable to social, economic and health problems.

Violence and economic exploitation

Approximately 218 million children worldwide, ages 5 to 17, engage in some form of child labour. Of these, 126 million engage in illegal, hazardous or exploitative child labour.[10]

Approximately 8 million children are engaged in the "worst forms of child labour",[11] defined as child trafficking, debt bondage and forced labour, the forced recruitment of children in armed conflict; child prostitution and child pornography; the use of children in illicit activities, such as in the production and trafficking of drugs; and any form of work that can harm children.[12]

Two million girls, ages 5 to 15, are initiated into the commercial sex industry annually.[13] Sex trafficking in girls is fuelled by gender inequality; unrelenting demand factors; female poverty; myths and stereotypes; and financial and political crises. Girls seeking to improve their lives through employment, migration or other opportunities are often exploited by traffickers and pimps and treated as commodities to be bought, sold and repeatedly raped by the countless buyers they are required to "service".

Negative cultural attitudes and practices

Cultural norms, gender roles and gender stereotypes are at the root of gender inequality.[14] Gender stereotypes and the undervalued social roles associated with the marginalized status of women heighten the vulnerability of girls.

Cultural preference for sons has resulted in over 100 million missing girls due to female foeticide, infanticide, malnutrition and neglect.[15] Cultural attitudes and practices have also resulted in the harmful genital cutting of more than 70 million girls and women, violating their human rights and physical and psychological integrity.[16]

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[8] Plan (2007), p. 54.

[9] Plan (2009), p. 69.

[10] ILO-IPEC (2006) *The end of child labour: Within reach*, Geneva: International Labour Office, p. xi.

[11] ILO-IPEC (2002) *Every child counts: New global estimates on child labour*, Geneva: International Labour Office.

[12] ILO Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour.

[13] Y. Rafferty (2007), "Children for sale: child trafficking in Southeast Asia", *Child Abuse Review*, vol. 16, pp. 401-422.

[14] P. O'Reilly (2001), "Learning to be a girl", *Educating Young Adolescent Girls* (P. O'Reilly, E. P. Penn, & K. de Marrais, eds.), NJ: Erlbaum, pp. 11- 28.

[15] Plan (2009), p. 37.

[16] UNICEF (2009), *Progress for Children*, p. 12.

Recommendations

Discrimination and violence against girls will end when Governments and their citizens address gender inequality.

End discrimination

- Abolish laws that support discrimination against girls, including inheritance, dowry and marriage laws, and provide for birth registration.
- Fund programmes to combat discrimination based on gender, age, race, ethnicity, social status, religion, disability, migrant or refugee status.
- Undertake systematic reform of education creating rights-based, gender-sensitive curricula, infrastructure and pedagogy designed to promote equality and the rights of all girls to free education.
- Ensure that business opportunities are fair and equitable and equip girls with economic tools to achieve full economic empowerment.
- Launch public campaigns to eliminate discrimination based on the notion of girls' inferiority and support positive attitudes and behaviours that encourage girls' full partnership in the household and public spheres. Such campaigns must target the media and address the role of men and boys in establishing gender equality and emphasize the societal benefits of girls' empowerment.
- Collect, analyse and disseminate data disaggregated by sex, age, socio-economic status, race and ethnicity in order to create an inclusive gender perspective for planning, implementation and monitoring of government programmes and for benchmarking across nations and communities.

Protect girls

- Develop gender-responsive budgeting that explicitly allocates monies for programmes to end violence against girls, including genital cutting, incest, prenatal sex selection, infanticide, and trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation; education and training; and physical and mental health.
- Develop legislation that incorporates the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.
- Sign, ratify and implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols.
- Invite the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) working in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to identify best practices across the globe that decriminalize girls in prostitution and prosecute perpetrators.
- Provide gender-sensitive, community-based reintegration programmes for children who have been trafficked, commercially exploited or victimized in armed conflict.

Empower girls

- Remove all barriers to education for girls including school fees, discriminatory attitudes and curricula and ensure their safety. Education is the right of every girl and the key to transforming her life and the life of her community.
- Increase girls' competence through education and training that includes social, political and economic empowerment to prepare them for their critical roles in their families and communities.
- Promote the participation, visibility and empowerment of girls by creating safe spaces for them to speak and to obtain assistance. The skills, ideas and energy of all girls, especially those from disadvantaged groups, are vital for sustainable development.
- Strengthen the role of civil society, especially girls' organizations, in tackling gender stereotypes and empowering girls to participate more fully in their families and communities.
- Partner with families and communities to address the needs of girls heading households and children without parental care, including in the context of the HIV/AIDS, to ensure that programmes are holistic and include measures to increase men and boys' responsibility for caregiving.
- Monitor and evaluate macroeconomic policies and social spending to ensure that girls' needs are addressed.

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Statement submitted by IPAS, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

1. This year the Economic and Social Council will review the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and how it can contribute to meeting the Millennium Development Goals. In this context, we would like to highlight progress made and actions needed to implement the Platform recommendations concerning unwanted pregnancies and access to abortion.

2. The Platform for Action calls attention to the health consequences of unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions and calls for action to address this critical public health issue. Specifically, paragraph 106 (k) states that:

(a) Prevention of unwanted pregnancies must always be given the highest priority;

(b) Women who have unwanted pregnancies should have ready access to reliable information and compassionate counselling;

(c) All women should have access to treatment for complications arising from abortion;

(d) Abortions permitted by law should be safe;

(e) States should consider reviewing laws containing punitive measures against women who have undergone illegal abortions.

Prevention and management of unwanted pregnancies

3. The past several decades have seen a dramatic overall increase in the use of modern family planning methods around the world. Between 1960 and 2000, the proportion of married women in developing countries using contraception to prevent unintended pregnancies rose from less than 10 to 60 per cent. The Guttmacher Institute found that increases in global contraceptive use contributed to fewer unwanted pregnancies and, in turn, a decline in the number of abortions. Such improvements have been uneven, however, with many developing countries still reporting very low contraceptive prevalence rates. In addition, while emergency contraception pills are now available in 140 countries, many women still do not know about this option, and neither emergency contraception pills nor intrauterine devices are available in a timely and affordable manner to poor, rural and young women. Emergency contraception is also being made illegal or less easily available in some countries, so that women's chances of using this option are severely curtailed.

Increasing access to safe abortion

4. In October 2009, Government ministers at the High-Level Meeting on Maternal Health held in Addis Ababa issued a call to action urging Presidents and ministers to provide effective and comprehensive voluntary family planning, safe abortion and post-abortion care, in line with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. Over 400 legislators and ministers at the Fourth Global Parliamentarians' Conference on Population and Development reiterated this call to action and further called for a review of "all laws and practices that still restrict access to sexual and reproductive health services".

5. The 15 years since the Beijing Platform for Action was issued have brought some improvements in access to safe legal abortion. In 2003, the World Health

Organization (WHO) issued *Safe Abortion: Technical and Policy Guidance for Health Systems*, a groundbreaking resource that paved the way for a number of countries to develop and disseminate national standards and guidelines on the scope and quality of abortion care.

6. Health-care organizations and professional medical groups have issued clinical and ethical guidance on abortion, including the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO). FIGO's guidelines state that women have the right to access legal, safe, effective, acceptable and affordable methods of contraception and safe abortion services. The International Confederation of Midwives has stated that the education of midwives should include training to prepare them for their role in providing abortion-related services that ensure women's safety and well-being. The Asia and Oceania Federation of Obstetrics and Gynaecology has urged obstetricians, gynaecologists and their professional associations to play a leadership role in promoting governmental action to promote access to safe abortion services for all indications permitted by law. The Committee for Women's Sexual and Reproductive Rights of the Latin American Federation of Obstetric and Gynecological Societies (FLASOG) urged Latin American and Caribbean Ministries of Health to formulate regulations that will facilitate women's access to legal abortion, to preserve their health and lives and reduce maternal mortality.

7. Such policy guidance has contributed to notable, though still insufficient, progress in training physicians, midwives and other health providers and in making technologies for safe abortion available and affordable, including vacuum aspiration instruments and pharmacological agents as recommended by WHO.

Reviewing laws with punitive measures against women who terminate pregnancies

8. Research shows that women have abortions just as frequently where abortion is legally restricted as where it is broadly permitted by law, but deaths and injuries from unsafe abortion occur at much higher rates in restrictive settings. Accordingly, one of the most important actions to reduce mortality and morbidity due to unsafe abortions is the liberalization of abortion laws, which was carried out in about two dozen countries between 1995 and 2008. Nevertheless, 40 per cent of women live in countries with highly restrictive abortion laws; this is the case for 92 per cent of women of reproductive age in Africa and 97 per cent in Latin America.

9. A number of national, state and provincial governments are now considering amending their laws to increase women's access to legal termination of pregnancy. Twenty-seven countries have ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, which states that State Parties should take all appropriate steps to "protect the reproductive rights of women by authorizing medical abortion in cases of sexual assault, rape, incest, and where the continued pregnancy endangers the mental and physical health of the mother or the life of the mother or the foetus".

10. Within the United Nations human rights system, treaty monitoring committees periodically assess Governments' compliance with the human rights conventions they have endorsed. Increasingly, these bodies have urged Governments to ensure women's ability to access safe abortion and post-abortion care, in accordance with existing laws; they have also recommended that Governments review legal restrictions on abortion, in the light of evidence of the negative impact of unsafe abortion on women and girls and women's rights to health care; privacy and

confidentiality; the benefits of scientific progress; and freedom from discrimination. In a number of cases, they have recommended that Governments remove punitive measures against women who terminate pregnancies and increase indications for legal abortion.

Actions required

11. In June 2009, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 11/8 recognizing that maternal mortality is a health, development and human rights challenge. The Council asked all States to "renew their political commitment to eliminating preventable maternal mortality and morbidity at the local, national, regional and international levels, and to redouble their efforts to ensure the full and effective implementation of their human rights obligations [and] the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action...".

12. Despite progress achieved to date, much remains to be done if we are to stop women and girls from having unwanted pregnancies and suffering from unsafe abortions. Urgent needs include:

(a) Changing the conditions that lead to unwanted pregnancies, including poverty, lack of gender equity, and sexual violence;

(b) Establishing, preserving and fully implementing laws, norms and regulations that make modern contraceptive methods, including emergency contraception, accessible and available to every woman;

(c) Ensuring that post-abortion care and safe abortion services are included in both public and private health services and that both vacuum aspiration and pharmaceutical methods can be provided by doctors and mid-level providers;

(d) Using community-based approaches and the media to help women understand how to prevent unintended pregnancies, their legal rights to safe abortion, the dangers of unsafe abortion, and where to obtain safe abortion care;

(e) Dedicating specific attention to the needs of adolescents, women with disabilities, women living with HIV and displaced women (refugees, asylum-seekers, etc.) in relation to unwanted pregnancies, contraception and abortion care;

(f) Promoting constructive dialogues at the national and local levels about unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion;

(g) Reforming policies and laws to increase access to safe abortion, in accordance with human rights principles; and

(h) Ensuring that these efforts receive sufficient financial support.

13. Unwanted pregnancies continue and unsafe abortions account for approximately 13 per cent of global maternal deaths, with a much higher proportion in many developing countries. Unsafe abortion is one of the easiest causes of maternal mortality and morbidity to address, through improved access to family planning information and services, high-quality post-abortion care and safe, legal abortion. Meeting the Millennium Development Goal 5 targets of reducing maternal mortality and achieving universal access to reproductive health care can only be met if unsafe abortion is fully and effectively addressed, as outlined above.

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Statement by Madre Inc., a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

1. Madre Incorporated is an international women's human rights organization that works towards a world in which all people enjoy the fullest range of individual and collective human rights; in which resources are shared equitably and sustainably; in which women participate effectively in all aspects of society; and in which people have a meaningful say in decisions that affect their lives. Madre works on a wide range of issues that effect women, including violence against women.

2. Reducing violence against women should be seen as an indicator for achieving Millennium Development Goal 3, on the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. The United Nations fact sheet on Goal 3 notes that despite some gains, violence against women remains an obstacle to the achievement of the Goals.[1] According to the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, women's role as food providers and carers for their families, together with their general lack of property and labour rights, makes them particularly vulnerable to violence. Gender inequality perpetuates violence against women and hinders women's abilities to advance in education and employment opportunities, which thereby reinforces gender inequality.

3. States have an obligation to promote de facto equality between men and women as well as to provide a legal framework that protects women's human rights, including preventing violence against women. The Secretary-General's study on violence against women concludes that States are not only responsible for directly addressing violence against women but also for "identifying patterns of inequality that could result in violence and taking steps to overcome them".[2]

4. States must address violence against women and bring their national legislation into conformity with international laws and obligations by implementing preventative strategies, ending impunity, initiating or expanding reliable data collection and ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol without reservation.

Preventative strategies

5. In 2007, in recognizing the growing epidemic of violence against women, the United Nations Committee against Torture recommended that States "adopt legislation and other measures to combat violence against women, within the framework of plans to take measures to prevent such violence, including domestic violence".[3]

6. However, the growing pattern and practice of violence against women remains largely de-prioritized by lawmakers. The minimum laws and policies that do exist on violence against women are often not effectively enforced owing to a lack of awareness and cultural norms that permit or encourage abuses of women's human rights. In May 2009, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women stated that "Responses to violence against women by governments and international

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[1] See *End Poverty 2015, Millennium Development Goal fact sheet*, available at http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/.

[2] See A/61/122 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1.

[3] See CAT/C/CR/33/2, conclusions and recommendations (Greece, November 2004).

institutions have been fragmented and treated in isolation from the wider concern for women's rights and equality".[4]

7. States should adopt cohesive national plans of action for the elimination of violence against women that include legal measures, service programmes, redress and prevention strategies. States should encourage collaborative participation with the civil sector, including non-governmental organizations, academics, lawyers, educators and advocates for both the drafting of national plans and for their strategic implementation. Prevention goals can be better met through a coordinated community approach that partners societal systems together, such as the legal system (law enforcement, criminal and civil court) with social and advocacy programmes (shelters, schools, public safety and education).

8. Additionally, the officials responsible for the implementation of such programmes and policies, including police, prison and immigration officers, judicial and medical personnel, social workers and educators, must be provided with adequate gender-sensitivity training, including the causes, consequences, forms and legal ramifications of violence against women. Additionally, States should also educate members of society about and access to justice for women and include women in the creation of all awareness-raising and prevention strategies.

9. States should prioritize the prevention of violence against women in national policies and programmes; implement gender-sensitivity trainings for all officials responsible for the implementation of policies and programmes that address violence against women; initiate or enhance awareness-raising and prevention campaigns that incorporate women's perspectives.

Ending impunity

10. When States fail to bring perpetrators to justice and society explicitly or tacitly condones such violence, impunity not only facilitates further abuses, it also normalizes gender violence. The lack of accountability results in further endangerment of women. Furthermore, women lose faith in the justice system as prevailing gender inequalities are reinforced.

11. Guaranteeing that perpetrators of violence against women are held accountable goes beyond increasing penalties for their actions. The State must act with due diligence in preventing violence against women by implementing effective measures to ensure thorough and timely investigation, prosecution and punishment, as well as by providing access to redress for victims. The standard of due diligence is clear in general recommendation No. 19 of the Committee on the Elimination of Violence against Women, which notes that "States may also be responsible for private acts if they fail to act with due diligence to prevent violations of rights or to investigate and punish acts of violence, and for providing compensation". In addition, in 2007, the Committee against Torture made it clear in its general comment No. 2 that States must exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish gender violence.

12. The State must also review, revise and remove discriminatory laws against women. In situations of conflict, post-conflict and internal displacement, where women are particularly vulnerable to violence, additional measures of protection

[4] A/HRC/11/6, para. 23.

should be put in place. Moreover, women affected by these issues should be involved in all stages of planning, as reflected in Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1880 (2009), 1888 (2009), and 1889 (2009).[5]

13. States should periodically assess current laws, policies and programmes that address violence against women; evaluate their compliance with international obligations; remove discriminatory laws and practices against women; and implement a legal and policy framework that guaranteed due diligence and promotes the full protection and promotion of women's human rights.

Research and data collection

14. While violence against women has gained greater visibility and more government attention, there is a dearth of reliable data on its causes and consequences, and few measures that address root causes of violence or challenge cultural norms that promote the institutionalization of violence such as rape and domestic violence. The treaty bodies have repeatedly expressed their concern that it is critical for States to implement systematic collection of data not only on violence against women but also general data disaggregated by sex. Such data is crucial in determining effective strategies for preventing and redressing violence against women. Without reliable data, the few resources that are allocated to addressing violence against women may be wasted on programmes with little or no impact.

15. According to the Secretary-General's study on violence against women,[2] it is the responsibility of States to ensure the systematic collection and publication of data, including through supporting non-governmental organizations, academics and other actors engaged in research. Non-governmental organizations have been calling on Governments to provide the collection of broader and more accurate data since the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, and all of its reviews. The Secretary-General also advised, in the same report, that data collection on violence against women should be carried out in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including data suppliers, advocates and agencies providing services to women, policymakers, legislators and researchers.

16. The most underexamined forms of violence against women include femicides; sexual violence against women in armed conflict and post-conflict situations; trafficking in women for sexual and other exploitation; and hate crimes.[2] Furthermore, few studies have evaluated the effectiveness of preventive measures such as protection orders and mandatory arrests in domestic violence situations.

17. States should enact a systematic collection of data, disaggregated by sex and other relevant factors such as age, race, ethnicity and indigenous status,[6] which documents the prevalence and incidences of all forms of violence against women; its causes and consequences; evaluate the effectiveness of measures that prevent and redress violence against women; and promote research, data collection and analysis in partnership with civil society organizations.

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[5] Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security affirming "the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding, and stressing the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security" (see also resolutions 1880 (2009), 1888 (2009), and 1889 (2009) reaffirming).

[6] See *Mairin Iwanka Raya: Indigenous Women Stand Against Violence*, a companion report to the United Nations Secretary-General's study on violence against women (2006).

Ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

18. The rights of women are specifically elaborated in international and regional treaties, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has been clear that gender-based violence may breach certain provisions. The Committee mandates States parties to act to protect women against violence of any kind occurring within the family, at the work place or in any other area of social life.

19. States should ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol without reservations; States that have ratified the Convention with reservations should remove them; and States should revise all discriminatory laws against women and implement the Beijing Platform for Action, in accordance with both the Convention and the Optional Protocol.

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Statement submitted by Mothers' Union, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Please recycle

Statement

1. Mothers' Union is a Christian mission organization working through grass-roots membership to support families and communities around the world. Motivated by their faith, our 3.6 million members in 78 countries fight inequality and discrimination against women.

Beijing Platform for Action — 15 years on

2. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action set ambitious goals for furthering gender equality, development and peace. Some progress has been made since 1995 but the present statement outlines how much remains to be achieved.

Women, girls and poverty

3. Across the world, 1.4 billion people live on less than $1.25 per day.[1] Many indicators show that females are more likely to experience poverty than males — 68 per cent of female-headed households are classified as poor compared to 31 per cent of male-headed households.[1]

Education and training

4. Out of the 71 million children who are out of school across the world, 57 per cent are girls. Currently, 95 girls per 100 boys in the developing world are enrolled in primary education and 94 girls per 100 boys in secondary education. However, parity has been reached in only 30 per cent of countries with available data.[1]

Health

5. Globally, over half a million women die each year from causes related to pregnancy or birth — a figure that has not decreased since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action. Factors contributing to maternal mortality include the lack of skilled health workers, drugs and medical equipment, and the prevalence of disease and poor nutrition.[2] HIV/AIDS now affects more women than men in sub-Saharan Africa.[3]

Violence

6. Up to 70 per cent of women across the world experience physical or sexual violence at the hands of men, in their lifetime, and violence causes the deaths of more women between the ages of 15 and 44 than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents and war combined.[4] Up to 30 per cent of women in some countries report that their first sexual experience was forced.[5]

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[1] *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2009* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.09.I.12).

[2] United Nations Children's Fund, *The State of the World's Children 2009: Maternal and Newborn Health* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.09.XX.7), December 2008.

[3] Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, *2008 Report on the global AIDS epidemic*.

[4] United Nations Development Fund for Women, Factsheet: Violence against Women Worldwide, 2009.

[5] ActionAid *Hit or miss? Women's rights and the Millennium Development Goals*, 2008.

Conflict

7. Since 1995, global military expenditure has risen from $855 billion[6] to $1.46 trillion in 2008.[7] Women play different roles in and around conflict — victims (particularly of rape), survivors, combatants and peace activists. However, very few women participate in formal peace negotiations.[8]

The economy

8. Forty-nine per cent of women of working-age are in paid employment worldwide (across the world).[9] Globally, the gender pay gap is estimated at 15.6 per cent and it tends to be higher in female-dominated work environments such as health care, education and social work.[10] However, in the financial sector in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, for example, this gap rises to differences of 39 per cent in basic pay and 80 per cent in bonuses.[11]

Power and decision-making

9. Globally, only 17.7 per cent of seats in lower and upper legislative houses are held by women.[12] Only in Rwanda are there more women than men in parliament (56.3 per cent) and in eight countries there are no female parliamentarians.[13] Thirty-five per cent of Members of the European Parliament are women[14] and the United Nations has never had a female Secretary-General. Only 5 per cent of the FTSE 100 companies are headed by women.[15]

Media

10. Women are hugely underrepresented in (the) media coverage in 2005, 80 per cent of people featured in news stories worldwide were men and only 10 per cent of all news stories focused specifically on women.[16] The portrayal of women is more sexualized than that of men[17] and in the United States 85 per cent of advertisements portraying children in a sexualized manner are using images of girls.[18]

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[6] www.idsa.in/idsastrategiccomments/RisingCostoftheGlobalWaronTerror_LKBehera_010108.

[7] www.globalissues.org/article/75/world-military-spending#WorldMilitarySpending.

[8] Tsjeard Bouta and Georg Frerks, *Women's Roles in Conflict Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Literature Review and Institutional Analysis*. Netherlands Institute of International Relations, The Hague, the Netherlands, 2002.

[9] *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2009*.

[10] International Trade Union Confederation, *The Global Gender Pay Gap*, February 2008.

[11] See www.equalityhumanrights.com/media-centre.

[12] Women in Politics: 2008 (map).

[13] See seats held by women in national parliament, percentage available from mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Data.aspx.

[14] Available from Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and Inter-Parliamentary Union, www.europeanirish.com/news_details.php?news_id=2009.

[15] www.guardian.co.uk/business/2009/nov/10/imperial-tobacco-alison-cooper.

[16] See Global Media Monitoring Project available from www.unifem.org/news_events/story_detail.php?StoryID=974.

[17] Edited by Jane D. Brown, Jeanne R. Steele, Kim Walsh-Childers, *Sexual Teens, Sexual Media: Investigating Media's Influence on Adolescent Sexuality*. Routledge, New York, 2002.

[18] American Psychological Association, *Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualisation of Girls*, 2007.

Affirming the Beijing Declaration

11. The key to advancing the status of women is to build and support strong and mutually respectful relationships between men and women, boys and girls. These relationships need to be based on the values of dignity, justice, peace, reconciliation and the equal value of all. Mothers' Union works to further these values and the goals of the Beijing Declaration in the following ways, across the world.

Eliminating discrimination

12. Eliminating discriminatory attitudes is fundamental to ending discrimination against women in practice. Through programme and policy work, Mothers' Union challenges discriminatory attitudes, such as those towards the sharing of responsibilities in the home and community and towards harmful practices such as female genital mutilation.

Participation of men

13. Through our worldwide Parenting Programme, fathers are encouraged to participate in caring for children and other family responsibilities. The Literacy and Development Programme in Burundi, Malawi and the Sudan provides literacy and numeracy skills and also encourages men and women to discuss and address challenges together within their families and communities, especially the challenges of gender inequalities and domestic violence.

Economic independence

14. Mothers' Union members provide skills training in microenterprise, such as the cultivation of mushroom, tie-dying, poultry rearing and gardening. In the United Kingdom, Mothers' Union has lobbied the Government on equal pay and rights to flexible working and parental leave, to enable women to enjoy more equal and equitable participation in the labour market.

Sustainable development through education

15. In the 10 years since its launch, the Literacy and Development Programme has not only provided over 57,000 learners with literacy and numeracy education, it has also inspired the mobilization of 646 new development groups and empowered over 10,000 women to start their own post-literacy activities, such as community assistance, income generation, advocacy and the formation of savings and credit associations.

Women promoting peace

16. Mothers' Union members live in some of the most conflict-ridden areas of the world, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Kenya, Myanmar, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, the Sudan and Zimbabwe. Following (the) civil unrest in Kenya, Mothers' Union has run post-conflict workshops bringing together women from neighbouring communities to talk through their emotions and rebuild relationships.

Eliminating violence against women

17. Mothers' Union provides education, training and resources on the prevention of violence against women, as well as practical support and women's refuges for those affected by such violence.

Health

18. In Malawi, Mothers' Union members educate groups of women about family planning and HIV/AIDS and how to access treatment. In Zimbabwe, members have raised money to build a shelter to serve as a waiting room for women who will be giving birth and for the provision of health equipment. In several countries, including Burundi, Kenya, Uganda and the Zambia, members are trained as traditional birth attendants.

Media

19. In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Mothers' Union has been raising awareness of and campaigning against the use of the sexualized imagery of girls in advertising and marketing and sexualized products aimed at all children.

Strengthening commitment to the Platform for Action

20. Mothers' Union calls on Governments to strengthen their commitment to the goals of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to achieve them hand in hand with the Millennium Development Goals. In particular, Governments need to:

(a) Eliminate all forms of institutional discrimination against women and counteract discriminatory attitudes in society through education, addressing the media's sexualized and violent representation of women and girls and strengthening commitment to all human rights;

(b) Invest in health care and health education, including the training of health-care workers, for all people at all stages of life and recognize that women are affected by the health of their whole family;

(c) Ensure that girls and women have equal access to and participation in education and training at all stages of life, including women and girls with caring responsibilities, those living in poverty and those living in rural areas;

(d) Prohibit discrimination and harassment in the workplace, including by eliminating the gender pay gap and the denial of land rights, and ensure that family-friendly work practices are available, for both women and men;

(e) Ensure fair and equal political participation for women, including freedom to vote and to take on genuine political leadership at all levels and relating to all political areas.

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Statement by International Council of Women, National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs, National Council of Women of the United States, Soroptimist International of Greece, World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations and American Psychological Association, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.

09-65088 (E) 241209

Please recycle

Statement

1. We, the international and national non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, are committed to promoting the advancement of women and their quality of life through their empowerment, throughout their lives. Since Beijing Plus 10, it has generally been agreed that the Beijing Platform for Action has been left behind with more attention being given to the Millennium Development Goals. The Goals indisputably have their value; however, at this time, we believe that more attention must be given to women's issues because they are last on the list in every area. Women still have an excessive burden of work, compared to men. They are excluded from progress in determining policy and stereotyped in the role of domestic work. Fifteen years after the Beijing Platform for Action, women are still discriminated against and are still victims of violence.

2. We urge the promotion of planned gender mainstreaming and gender strategy in all policies and programmes. We must strengthen legal frameworks. It is essential to ensure women's economic empowerment and increase their access to and control over resources. Women must be given access to knowledge, especially the practical type that can mean the difference between life and death to their families, such as learning how to combat malaria, make compost, obtain better nutrition and swim. This knowledge will help them to protect themselves and their families in their day-to-day battles, in times of crisis and in natural disasters.

3. Now, more than ever, women are recognized as the cornerstone of our societies. Therefore, it behooves Governments, development agencies and communities to support them and to ensure that their needs are met, in order to elevate the overall human condition. We support the sustainable improvement of women's position and quality of life and the realization of justice and gender equality at the national, regional and international levels. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action has done much to draw the world's attention to the importance of uplifting women in our society and guaranteeing them equal access to their basic human rights; however, much remains to be done. In 2010, the fifteenth anniversary of the Declaration, let us renew our commitment to women and reconfirm our belief that they are fully entitled to all the benefits of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

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Statement by New Japan Women's Association, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.

09-65121 (E) 210110

Please recycle

Statement

1. Since its foundation in 1962, the New Japan Women's Association (NJWA) has been working for the abolition of nuclear weapons, the rights of women and children and to create a global women's solidarity for peace, among other issues. As a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, NJWA has attended United Nations World Conferences on Women and sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women.

2. For the fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 and its review process, NJWA presented reports on the situation of Japanese women and the problems of the national effort for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and took part in follow-up work at the regional (Asia-Pacific) and global levels.

3. Since the 1975 International Women's Year, the United Nations and the women's movement have worked together to achieve the goals of gender equality, development and peace. In the context of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women at which Member States will undertake the 15-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the review of the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, NJWA recommends taking the following issues into account, in order for the Beijing+15 review to produce effective outcomes.

Gender equality

4. The Global Gender Gap Report 2009, published by the World Economic Forum, says there is still much work to be done in education, health, the workplace, legislation and politics before women enjoy the same opportunities as men. It points to such problems as the gap between girls and boys in access to education and health care because of the lower value placed on girls, women facing barriers to entering the workforce or to accessing leadership positions and vast underrepresentation of women in political leadership and decision-making. It then asserts that the combined impact of these gaps entails colossal losses to the global society and economy.

5. In February 2008, the Secretary-General launched the campaign "UNiTE to End Violence against Women". According to the World Bank and the World Health Organization, up to 70 per cent of women experience physical or sexual violence from men, with one in five women likely to be raped in their lifetime. Early marriage causes health risks to young women and more than 130 million women alive today have undergone female genital mutilation, with 2 million girls a year being at risk of female genital mutilation. Many women are subjected to other forms of harmful practices such as dowry murders and honour killings. Women continue to be in disadvantageous positions in employment, earning much less than men, and the situation was even worsened owing to the economic crisis. It is essential for Member States to display their political will to fully implement international agreements such as the Beijing Platform for Action, the Beijing+5 outcomes and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

6. NJWA welcomes General Assembly resolution 63/311 on system-wide coherence, adopted by the Assembly in September 2009, which contains the proposal to create a new single women's agency headed by an Under-Secretary-General. NJWA joins other non-governmental organizations in calling for a strong

mandate and substantial funding to be given to the entity, so that it can display political leadership for advancing women's rights and gender equality. It urges Member States not only to support the women's agency but also to take this opportunity to strengthen their own national machineries.

Development

7. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals Report 2009 says that despite important gains, progress is too slow to meet the Goals. As the emerging issues such as the economic crisis, food shortages and climate change pose obstacles to the effort, more financial assistance from developed countries is necessary. Worldwide, the number of people living in extreme poverty fell from 1.8 billion in 1990 to 1.4 billion in 2005, but the World Bank reported in September 2009 that the economic crisis would force 89 million more people into extreme poverty by the end of 2010. The 2009 Global Hunger Index, published by the International Food Policy Research Institute and other groups, shows that hunger has decreased globally with overall scores improving from "alarming" (20.0) in 1990 to "serious" (15.2) in 2009, but the Global Hunger Index of the 29 countries in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia exceeds the "alarming" level, with malnutrition increasing among children. Comparing the Global Hunger Index with the Global Gender Gap Index, the International Food Policy Research Institute report finds that the countries with an improved Global Hunger Index have achieved progress in women's access to education, their participation in politics and their involvement in the economy. The key solution to global hunger therefore is reducing gender disparities, particularly in education and health.

8. According to estimates by the United Nations Development Programme and other organizations, women represent 70 per cent of the world's poor, although they perform 66 per cent of the world's work and produce 50 per cent of the food. The International Labour Organization estimates that owing to the economic crisis, 22 million more women will lose their jobs, pushing up the female unemployment rate to 7.4 per cent while the rate for men is expected to be 7 per cent. These facts show that women are highly underrepresented in economic decision-making positions. Believing that the current development paradigm should be reviewed so that development policies can advance the empowerment of women and the Millennium Development Goals, NJWA urges Member States to:

(a) Incorporate gender perspectives into economic and employment policies, and increase the participation of women in decision-making;

(b) Employ gender-responsive budgeting with a mechanism for tracking and assessing public fund investments;

(c) Increase aid to accelerate the effort for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and take note of the need for financing for gender equality and the needs of the local populations with particular attention to women;

(d) Study consequences of climate change and the damage inflicted by frequent natural disasters on the socially vulnerable, including women, to work out measures to address those issues from gender perspectives.

Peace

9. NJWA reiterates its support for Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, and Council resolution 1820 (2008) on the

elimination of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. It further welcomes the recent adoption of Council resolutions 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009) focusing on the implementation of the previous two resolutions. NJWA will work for the promotion of their implementation, including through information dissemination. NJWA underscores that the four resolutions identify women not only as victims of conflict and violence but also as key players in conflict resolution, prevention and peacebuilding.

10. As a women's organization in Japan with first-hand experience of tragic atomic bombing, NJWA has been a strong advocate for the abolition of nuclear weapons. Now that the President of the United States of America, which remains the only State with nuclear power to have used nuclear weapons, has committed himself to achieving a "world without nuclear weapons", there is a great opportunity to push nuclear disarmament forward, particularly at the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. A collective effort towards nuclear abolition will prompt each State to redefine its security policy and eventually to substantially reduce military spending, thus paving the way to abolishing war. Nuclear abolition can be an effective way not only to prevent catastrophe but also to redirect resources to human needs.

11. Even today, wars, conflicts and occupation by foreign troops continue in many nations and women are trying to sustain their families and communities while at risk of sexual violence and human rights violations. In countries such as Japan, where foreign military bases are hosted, women and all other people living around the bases are at risk of being subjected to sexual assaults and other heinous crimes by military personnel and suffer the unbearable noise from airplanes. NJWA, a non-governmental organization in a country with a war-renouncing Constitution, urges the Government of Japan to make use of the Constitution's peace principles in diplomacy, and hopes other countries will follow the examples of Latin American countries to incorporate a peace clause into their law towards a world without war.

12. NJWA urges Member States at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women to:

(a) Commit themselves to Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009) and take concrete measures for their implementation;

(b) Incorporate a gender perspective into diplomacy and security policies and increase women's representation in decision-making positions;

(c) Drastically cut military spending and redirect resources away from military security towards human security and the effort for achieving the Millennium Development Goals;

(d) Rely on peaceful means for resolving conflicts. Recalling that the first resolution adopted by the General Assembly (resolution 1(I)) called for the elimination of atomic weapons, Member States at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women should appeal for a substantial outcome to be produced at the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference and for the start of negotiations on an international treaty banning and eliminating nuclear weapons.

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Statement by Northern Ireland Women's European Platform, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Please recycle

Statement

1. The Northern Ireland Women's European Platform calls for broader and deeper monitoring of State parties to deliver effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. We are deeply concerned about the lack of progress and visible commitment with regard to substantially increasing women's participation in policy and decision-making. We strongly argue that until women are equally represented and visible in decision-making positions, including at the highest levels, policies and strategies will continue to be discriminatory and perpetuate women's inequality.

2. The Platform for Action commits State parties to address this deficit, but unless States are required to initiate specific measures with clear targets that are time bound, progress will be limited, and it will be impossible to monitor.

3. Although State parties completed the questionnaire, non-governmental organizations need to be able to contribute more effectively to the scrutiny of the progress by, for example, being able to submit a formal shadow report.

4. The Northern Ireland Women's European Platform therefore recommends that, in the implementation of the Platform for Action:

- Clear targets be set and actions be time bound
- Monitoring be robust and transparent
- Monitoring outcomes be disseminated
- Non-governmental organizations have the opportunity to critique the submissions of State parties before the official event
- Positive action be taken to increase the proportion of women in decision-making roles.